



British Focusing Association NEWSLETTER

Issue 13: November 2018



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From the Editors

Gordon Adam



I am pleased to include some input from The International Focusing Institute (TIFI) in this issue in the form of a report from Ruth Hirsch, a member of the International Leadership Council 'wing' of TIFI. This is the first of a series of contributions from Ruth highlighting what's happening in the TIFI world, which supports the 'global' aspirations of this newsletter. My hope is that it can support the Focusing community internationally as well as within the UK!

More locally, the most significant UK Focusing community event since the last issue came in the form of a gathering of around 40 Focusers in a field near Cheltenham for the second BFA Focusing Community Camp. This camp, like its predecessor last year, was a great success and my contribution to this issue is a review of the camp, based partly on some very positive feedback received from many participants.

Finally, as you will read below in Pamela's editorial, she has decided to step down as co-editor of the newsletter. This brings a mix of emotions: some sadness and a sense of loss that I will be losing a trusted and supportive ally in producing the newsletter; appreciation and celebration of what we achieved together – seven rich and full issues of the newsletter which has involved many meetings and much work; a sense of acceptance that she is doing what she needs to do, after due consideration; and a trust that the newsletter will move forward in a way that is right for it!

My intention is to continue as editor for now – ideally with a new co-editor who has yet to materialise! I would like to thank Pamela for everything she has given to the newsletter and to me over the past two and a half years of working together and to wish her well in the next stage of her life journey!

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Pamela Carr



After completing this issue I will be stepping down as co-editor. This opens a wonderful opportunity for another creative Focusing someone, who is willing to join Gordon, to develop his/her writing and editing skills and contribute in a most worthwhile way to the community of Focusers in the UK and beyond.

It's the first time I've worked in such a truly collaborative and co-creative way over a period of time. The fun and enjoyment I've experienced, as well as the satisfaction of meeting the inevitable challenges, in a mindful, kindful and Focusing way, has surprised and inspired me. Thank you so much Gordon. It may have taken us a while to learn the steps and dance together as co-editors, but it's been an amazing and truly satisfying journey, always with Focusing to support the alchemy. I also warmly appreciate the more than twenty three contributors I've worked with and the opportunities to write nine of my own pieces for seven issues over the last two and a half years.

What's calling me away? Grand babes – twins, who will be arriving soon -- and a wish to be fully involved in this new phase of family life. Also, a new commitment to Tutor Training in holistic energy healing with The Healing Trust, helping more healers to reach out in the world to people and communities that can benefit.

So for now I'm saying 'au revoir,' with wishes that you too may embrace and benefit from healing in its many forms and guises, including Focusing.

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A Review of the Second BFA Focusing Community Camp

By Gordon Adam *Focusing Camp Co-organiser*



'Magical Sky – Magical Focusing Camp!' Photo by Gordon Adam

"Being among Focusing people is always special for me, but this time I've come away feeling my Focusing horizons have expanded. Such a safe and caring space for all of us to be whoever we were at that time, to be funny and serious and light-hearted and profound." Susan Jordan

Forty Focusers from all over the UK gathered at The Barns Centre at Toddington near Cheltenham this August for what could be described as a Focusing Feast! The daily schedule allowed for two spacious Focusing sessions, a selection of workshops, morning meditation, yoga and qigong, some free time in the afternoon and a variety of evening activities. Most people camped in tents in the lovely field but a dozen or so less hardy souls (including myself this time) opted for the comfort of bedrooms. Daily gatherings, workshops and evening activities were held in a yurt and additional workshop space came in the form of Carole's 'red tent' and we also used the main centre building.

The primary intention of the camp was to support Focusing community and to foster and enable connections to be made between Focusers from different parts of the UK who are often not in regular embodied (vs. Skype) contact with other Focusers. According to the feedback received from the majority of participants, this intention was amply fulfilled – around 90% of people who responded to a camp feedback questionnaire stated that **the thing they valued most about the camp was the opportunity to meet, connect/reconnect with, and Focus with other Focusers.**

The feedback also revealed that people particularly enjoyed: the diversity of workshops on offer and the opportunity to learn new ways of using Focusing; the natural setting of the camp and workshop spaces; the evening activities which included two evenings of dancing, a lovely poetry sharing session where many people shared their own poems, and a very entertaining cabaret session on the last night of the camp.

It was heartening as one of the organisers (along with Kay Hoffmann and Camilla Sim) to hear that **many people found the camp environment to be loving, caring, supportive, safe and accepting**, and that they benefited personally by being on the camp through deepening of their Focusing practice and experience, and through receiving personal support, healing and inspiration.

We did also face some challenges on site – the weather this year was much less kind than in last year's camp and having set up a dining area on the edge of the camp field, we had to relocate indoors after a couple of days due to heavy rain. This led to forty people eating in cramped conditions in a dining area designed for about twenty! Another challenge for many people came in the form of three dogs that had come with their owners. Allowing dogs on the camp was an experiment as we wanted to support those dog owners to attend the camp who might not otherwise be able to do so. Although many people enjoyed the presence of the dogs in the camping field, their presence in workshops and group gatherings created some distraction and tensions.

I personally encountered some challenges on the camp this year – mainly due to my role as organiser getting a bit mixed up with my own 'not quite conscious' unfolding personal process. This led to some quite intense and difficult emotional experiences for me on camp at times. However thanks to ongoing Focusing I now have more insight of what was going on and things are being processed and are moving forward – all 'grist for the mill' of being more open, aware and alive!

Highlights of the camp for me were: all sorts of meetings, conversations, hugs and encounters with people; the morning qigong; the Focusing on poetry workshop and the poetry sharing session; the dancing; our home group; and the lovely sense of cooperation and co-creativity in working together as co-organiser with Kay, Camilla and the other home group facilitators — Fiona, Suzi and Harriet.



The yurt at night
'A luminous pearly spaceship carrying us to the outer reaches of the (inner) universe'
Photo by Ella Higgs

One heartening 'carrying forward' from the camp is in the number of people who have continued to be in contact since then. I personally made new connections with several people that have carried forward in different types of communication, and I know a number of other new interconnections between people, both social and Focusing that have continued since our time together.

Finally, having enjoyed organising the last two camps, Kay, Camilla and I have decided to now step down from our organising role and we are currently in discussion with other members of the Focusing community who have expressed an interest in organising the next camp. We are hopeful the camp which we have given birth to will continue to develop and flourish – there seems no doubt about its popularity with those who have attended the first two camps! Finally, I'm delighted to announce that, just prior to publication, a date and venue have been fixed for a Focusing Camp next year:

Ringsfield Hall, Suffolk, from 28th August—1st September 2019. See you there!

Gordon Adam lives in Bristol and as well as having a passion for Focusing he has a strong interest in helping build Focusing community. He runs introductory workshops in local communities, facilitates an open monthly 'changes' type Focusing group, sends out a regular local Focusing newsletter and is a co-organiser of the BFA Focusing Community Camp. Gordon has been running 5-day Focusing retreats on Dartmoor and in the Southwest for the last 10 years, combining Focusing with periods of silence, immersion in the natural world and temporary community. He also works as a homeopathic teacher and supervisor and co-edits this newsletter.
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A Non-Official Report from The International Focusing Institute (TIFI): Some Highlights from the Past Five Years

By Ruth Hirsch *Certifying Coordinator, Member International Leadership Council*

When Gordon suggested offering an overview of things happening in the TIFI world, my first thoughts were – there have been so many changes in the past five years, where to start? This brought me to the idea that it might be helpful to start off with a summary overview of some of the main activities and accomplishments of the past five years.

After Gene and Mary Gendlin resigned their administrative leadership positions in The Focusing Institute at the end of 2013, Catherine Torpey was named as the new Executive Director. At about this time it was decided that in addition to the Board of Directors there would be an additional leadership structure, the International Leadership Council (ILC).

The ILC was intended to be a body of leaders from the Focusing community who would not have the legal and financial responsibilities of the Board and at the same time bring more awareness to issues relating to the needs of the international Focusing community. It was determined at the outset that although the ILC would report to the Board, it was hoped that members of each body would view the other as colleagues and support one another. Members of the Board and ILC are all selected by a nomination process that can be read about on the ILC webpage, focusing.org/ilc. For more information about the Board, see focusing.org/board.

One of our first responsibilities was the design of a Mission Statement and Strategic Plan for the Institute. This process lasted a few years, with regular meetings of a smaller Strategic Planning group composed of representatives from the Board and ILC, who worked out details that were then brought to the larger groups. We also had a number of in-person and online joint meetings of the Board and ILC to work on various aspects of the Plan. First the Mission Statement, and then the Strategic Plan were also shared with the Coordinators, and then with members of the Institute for comments and input.

The Focusing Institute Mission Statement:

Why 'Focusing' ?

Everyone has the potential to access and live from their unique bodily-felt knowing. Focusing, a process grounded in experiential listening, is a powerful way of interacting with this body-felt knowing that leads to mutual respect, authenticity and compassion. In this way, Focusing fosters peace and harmony in the world.

Who We Are

The Focusing Institute is an international, cross-cultural organization dedicated to supporting individuals and groups world-wide who are practicing, teaching and developing Focusing and its underlying philosophy.

What We Do

The Focusing Institute is committed to the promotion of Focusing and encourages a wide variety of Focusing-based applications and educational methodologies. It also serves as a catalyst for Focusing research, an information hub and custodian of Focusing-related literature, and provides physical and virtual meeting spaces for education, dialogue and interaction. In these and other ways, the Focusing Institute is committed to sharing and advancing the work of its founder, Eugene Gendlin, and those who have built on his legacy.

The Strategic Plan can be viewed or downloaded at http://www.focusing.org/mission/docs/TIFI_Strategic_Plan_4-17_EN.pdf. At present, the Strategic Plan has been translated from English into eight other languages. Links to these can be found on the page with the Mission Statement, [focusing.org/mission](http://www.focusing.org/mission).

Perhaps more relevant than the various projects the ILC has worked on is the fact that we are a team devoted as much as possible to 'felt sensing' and taking into account different perspectives of the Focusing community as well as the overall spirit of the community.

Based on the importance of Focusing training to our mission of bringing Focusing to more people world-wide, the ILC recognized a need for looking into issues relating to certification. It was decided that a first step would be to address the process of naming new Certifying Coordinators. Begun in 2016, this project looked at many of the very different ways that Coordinators are now being trained world-wide, and considered what processes might be most helpful to best support Focusing Trainers in taking on the responsibilities of the Certifying Coordinator. A pilot phase began in January, 2018.

Other important milestones for the Focusing Institute included a name change to the International Focusing Institute, the creation of a Membership Committee charged with addressing membership benefits and creating new offerings for members, the creation of a memorial website for Gendlin, eugenegendlin.com, extensive work on a revised updated TIFI website, a Felt Sense conference, the beginning of the Gendlin Center for Research focusing.org/gendlincenter and much much more.



Ruth Hirsch, MSW, MPH, CMT has been enjoying teaching Focusing internationally for 25 years. Based in Jerusalem, Ruth is a Therapist and Focusing Trainer who shares Focusing with therapists, coaches, and others as a life-enhancing practice as well as to enhance and deepen their work with clients. Besides teaching all levels of Focusing, she offers Guided Focusing Sessions and Focusing-Oriented Therapy to individuals world-wide both in-person and online.
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Teaching the Pause to Children

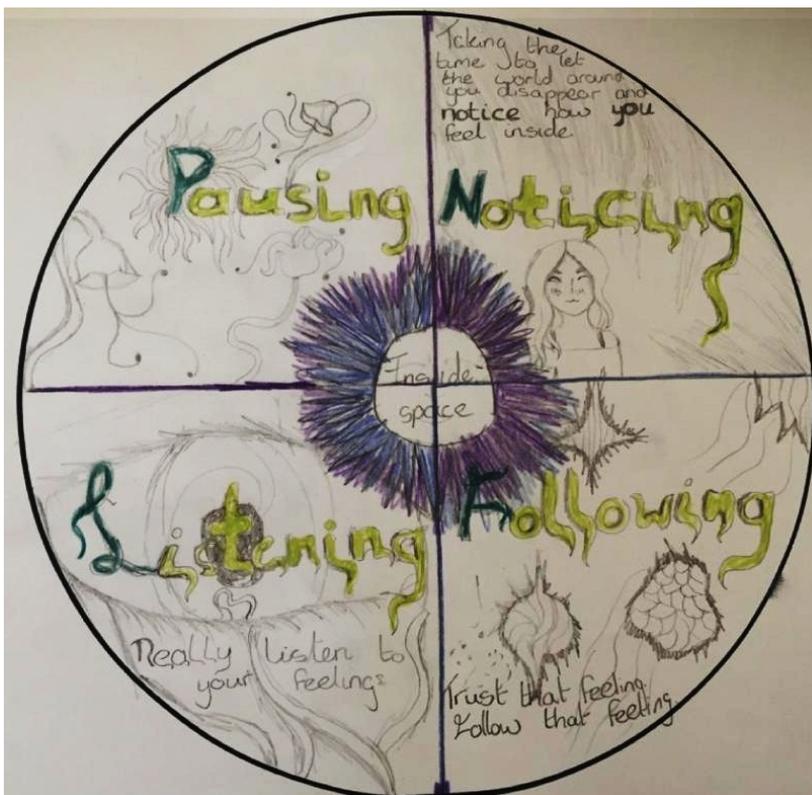
By Derek McDonnell

It all began in 2014 when a Principal and a class teacher were worried about a particularly rowdy class of Primary School students (age 11-12). Could I teach them what I had been teaching individual pupils in my Emotional Wellbeing work? That's what she wanted to know.

I have worked as a Social Care worker for the past 26 years within the Social Services and integrated Focusing as a way of being and interacting with my clients and families since 2000. I then trained in Children's Focusing.

A colleague and I discussed it over a cup of coffee. Could we teach the children Focusing? Maybe a ten week program. My colleague wondered if it could be the thesis for his Master's Program. Why not? And so we started.

Several weeks later, the Vice Principal (who is responsible for the management of discipline in the school), opened the door and looked in. He couldn't understand why the students were no longer being sent to him with discipline concerns and were so quiet. I don't know what we were doing. Maybe I was explaining about the head brain listening to the body brain. Or maybe the students were actors, and sitting in three chairs as Mr. Pause, Mr. Listen and Mr. Notice, while three other students came forward as a small felt sense, a medium felt sense and a large felt sense.



At the end of the ten weeks, the students felt they had learned a useful skill. One boy said: "It's a great idea. I used to get really angry and be short tempered. Now I'm able to control it. It's helped our class big time. We used to be split up in two groups to play in the yard. The two groups could get angry at each other and attack. Now we're all friendly and can play out in the yard together." "If I get pressurized, I kind of feel it in my throat and head. I just stop and breathe. Then I feel calm in my stomach and my chest."

This is a 12 year old girl's Mandala, created at the end of her 7 week program of Focusing.

Another boy said: "When my sister did something, I used to hit and shove her. Now I don't really care. Sometimes I get angry, I say, OK Benny, calm down. I have a weird feeling in my tummy, and then I know to pause." "Last year I used to argue a lot with a teacher and he tried to get us together to talk so we could be good friends. You put it all back into place."

A third student said: "I used to have a short fuse. Now I count from 1 to 10. I haven't gotten in trouble lately." "If I didn't know the pause, everybody would be fighting with me. The ten weeks were really good."

Now we are teaching this program in six schools. In order for this instruction to work, children need frequent opportunities to practice pausing and noticing. Our first class suggested that I use their Radio Studio to create 5 to 6 minute podcasts, each one inviting them to 'go inside'. Then their teacher plays the recordings first thing in the morning, after lunch, or at the end of the teaching day – at least one per day between my visits.

Here is an example transcription of a podcast. This one is to be played before a morning test.

I'd like to invite you now to take a few moments just to be quiet. You might have had a busy morning. Now that you've arrived just take time to notice your physical body right now sitting there, just getting a sense of your physical body for a few moments.

Now I'd like to invite you to notice the rhythm of your breath as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Just following it for a few moments. Now I'd like to invite you to notice, just like shining a torch or flashlight down inside, through your throat, chest, and tummy.

Take a moment to notice, now that it's Friday morning, the morning of your class tests, pausing to notice how you're feeling in this moment all about your tests. Maybe you're nervous, maybe you're a little bit anxious, or maybe you sense a tightness or a knot in your chest or tummy. Just notice whatever is there, freshly in this moment, just giving it its own space to be, and breathe for a few moments.

Now I'd like to invite you to place 'all about that' outside yourself right now. Maybe on the floor beside you, maybe in your schoolbag, maybe even outside the door. Just taking a few moments to do that now for yourself. You might notice, as you do that, that you have a sense of more space inside, now that "all about that" has been placed aside.

Just noticing. Now I'd like to invite you to notice that there's a part of you that's really looking forward to your test, that you've put in a lot of work and effort this week, be it in the classroom, or at home in the evenings. Just pausing to notice what comes with that part of 'all about your test' in your inside place. Maybe there's a calmness, maybe there's an eagerness to get on with your test. Just noticing.

And now I'd like to invite you to place all about that aside too, just for now. You might like to place it on the floor beside you, in your school bag, outside the classroom door, or even in a space that fits for you. Now with all of that placed aside, just noticing if there's more space right now. The part that's been nervous or jumpy or tight or anxious about the test has been placed aside, and the part that's maybe looking forward to it and has worked hard and is eager to do it has been placed aside too.

Just noticing if you can give space to that clear space inside. And I'd like to invite you to place a bubble around that clear space. And as you prepare to do your test shortly, just bringing that space in that bubble with you, and inviting that space to be there as you complete your test this morning.

Just gently and slowly, bringing your awareness back into the room, and also bringing that space that you created in your own bubble for your test now.

Take a few moments just to grow quiet. You had a busy time getting here. Now that you are here, just notice your physical body right now sitting in the chair, getting a sense of your physical body for a few moments.

The Irish educational system has some unique opportunities for teaching Focusing. Within its educational curriculum is a state mandated educational program called **'The Stay Safe Program,'** implemented in all schools. I was able to propose, to several principals, the inclusion of Focusing as a medium through which these state-created lessons are taught. These lessons cover a broad area (Safety – feeling safe and knowing when I feel unsafe; friendships and bullying; safe touches – Our Safety Bubble; all

about Secrets; and how to manage Strangers.) I teach the children to use the 'felt sense' as a compass to guide them towards safety.

Also in Ireland, the state has mandatory Continuing Professional Development courses (CPDs) for teachers, involving a week in the summer accredited by the Department of Education. We have been able to offer Focusing Training for teachers in this manner, only we call it **'Focusing Through Interactive Pausing.'**

For every school program I always submit a proposal for approval from the administration, and after every program I always present a summary. I want to be as professional as possible, and get management behind me at every possibility. I have a copy of a proposal which I can send to anyone who is interested.

What is exciting is the way the teaching process evolves each year. Gene said, when dealing with the felt sense, you are always evolving, and what you teach will always come out freshly, as if for the first time. There are always new ways forward, and finding them is like finding gold dust. You want to create a net to catch every part.

In our program I try to bring the pupils awareness to understand that their bodies are their living environment, which holds all of their life experiences.

"A human being is interaction, we are interactions, living bodies are interaction with the air and the ground and the food and other species members, and from that view, if you look at a person, if you are looking at me, you can see that I'm interaction. I'm interaction with other people."
Eugene Gendlin

Activity: Bottle of Coke

Note: This activity is usually done in the first session in a ten-week class.

My class and I were taped by Nada Lou at Scoil Bhríde School: <https://youtu.be/ml8Dfb2-Flg>

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: Two large bottles of coke; a third, smaller bottle of coke.

Goal: To explain the interactive Focusing pause to students age 9 – 15

Teaching Notes:

Children are sitting around a circle of letters which they have coloured and which spell 'Practicing the Pause.' The teacher says something like: Today we're going to connect with the place inside that can guide us.

To start off, (holding up a bottle of coke), remember this? Yes, it's a bottle of coke. (Shaking it) Now what's happening to the bottle of coke? (Reflecting the answers) It's fizzing up. It's like a volcano. It doesn't want to be shaken. It's like anger.

(Twisting off the top while holding the bottle over a plastic basin) Let's see what happens. (Pointing to the coke that's spilled over) That's my inside place and when something happens from the outside and I get shaken and I fizzle, if I don't pause, I explode with anger. (Shows basin to students) Look. It's the anger. And what's on the floor? More anger. It spreads everywhere.

Now when we first came to work together, were there lots of bottles of coke in this room? Were there lots of explosions? The anger fizzed up so much inside you that you couldn't hold it in, and it exploded all the way out.

Now let's look at this bottle. (If they all want to shake it, pass it around the room.) Do we notice inside when the shaking starts? (After all have had a turn) Take a moment to just grow quiet, and let's watch what happens.

(Untwist the cap for a moment, then twist it on again, doing this several times so you slowly let the fizz out.) What's happening? I'm twisting the cap back and forth. What does twisting represent? Having a pause. Look, is the bottle still fizzy? When I remember to pause with my fizzy place inside, what happens? It calms down.

(Pointing to the two bottles) Notice the difference. When I forget to pause, and I don't notice my inside place, what happens? The anger explodes and spreads everywhere. When I pause and notice I'm getting fizzy and I keep company with my inside place, what happens? It calms down.

Can you remember when we first started this exercise today? Was there a reaction? (Some people may have flinched or drawn back.) Yes, they didn't want to get destroyed with coke. Sometimes when we let the anger out, we destroy other people by hurting them. We also hurt ourselves. Fear comes, people get scared and they run away and it affects our friendships.

(Holding up small bottle of coke) What's this? Yes, a small bottle of coke. Sometimes inside myself – we have to use our imagination for this – imagine the little bottle inside the big bottle - that is a part of myself that might be upset. When you pause you can let the anger out slowly – someone says something hurtful or someone picks on you, a comment is made, it affects your whole self, but it irritates this small part of you and that part gets upset. What can help? (Answers: writing can help, drawing can help and counting can help). Yes, they all help us pause.

Are we learning how to be fizzy, pause, get calm, and to manage our feelings in a different way? Raise your hands if you think you are learning this. Did we think it was possible when we started? Now everyone has calmed down, how is that for you in the class?

This article has been adapted with the author's permission, from Resilience Initiatives, A Journal of Focusing Initiatives International, June 2018 | Volume 1, Issue 1. https://focusinginternational.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/06/ResilienceInitiativesJournal_Volume-1_Issue1.pdf



Derek Mc Donnell is a certifying coordinator with The International Focusing Institute and has offered 'Focusing Through Interactive Pausing' skill-based intervention in a variety of settings. He is currently teaching this in six schools, as an accredited CPD training for Primary School Teachers with the Department of Education and Science in Ireland.

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The Habit of Felt Sensing

By Rev. Ed McMahon

Sooner or later most people I know want to experience living more consciously in what they may call "God" or a "living presence" that continues beyond the mortality of everything around them. Things happen as we grow older that jar us into recognizing that we spend much of life splashing around on the surface of awareness. Wealth can go, health as well, along with dear friends and family. Life is fragile. We start feeling there must be more than all this busyness. Then we start carrying the question:

How do I live each day so that a felt consciousness of living in a Presence can grow and deepen right within the experiences of daily life? Many Focusers want to grow into this but don't know how and become sidetracked into too much thinking and talking rather than nurturing what I call the "habit of felt sensing."

When Gendlin's early writing came across my desk, and I had worked through all the jargon, verifying it in my own experience, I committed myself to living Focusing as a way of life, not just as a therapeutic tool. (Later, I would insert caring-feeling-presence into Gene's steps of Focusing.) So, every morning as we finished breakfast, Pete and I would spend time as Focusing companions. Then we added certain evenings each week, plus our own private Focusing as needed during the day. This we faithfully kept up for at least 15 years.

But as time went on I began to feel unnourished and burdened by all this therapeutic structure. Only once in a great while did I really feel the need of a partner. The rest felt like it was more a hindrance than a help. My life felt stuck at a kind of plateau even by the Focusing Steps themselves as I had adapted them.

Then one day I was Focusing and the words came, "You are barking up the wrong tree," which felt right. But at the same time it didn't feel like a rejection of Focusing. It felt on target, but still unclear. Continuing to Focus later came these words: "Go back and sit with what you felt in Gene's work was so right for you. Let it lead you where it will." So, I did.

What came about a week later was: "The felt sense is the key," and more holding the feel of that phrase: noticing and nurturing it until the symbol connected. "That feels like the body bridge into the transcendent that I have been searching for. Let go of all the organized Focusing unless you know you need it at times. Just grow into noticing and nurturing whatever has that edge of, 'There's more to it.' Make time to notice and nurture." So, I began and immediately realized that I had feelings about all kinds of interactions I wasn't paying attention to because they weren't necessarily between me and feeling OK. After that, I let go of all the formal stuff that felt like it was in the way and just took time to:

- notice how often I had feelings about so many things,
- pause to check them out in order to see whether any have that edge of the more to them,
- and for those that are really felt senses, make time to nurture them, take care of them.

The Habit of Felt Sensing and Caring-Feeling-Presence:

The habit of felt sensing rests on at least an implicit understanding that a felt sense is the body's way of inviting us to let "the more" of a story unfold. This unfolding doesn't happen unless the prior habit of what I have called caring-feeling-presence (CFP) has developed.

CFP as I created and taught it is that our body must communicate to a felt sense, welcoming, prizing, openness, caring, safety, affection in a physically felt way so that the felt sense can feel it. It is not effectively communicated by intention in the mind. It's like an intra body to body hug that says, "I'm here with you, and I care." You can't fool a felt sense involving fear, betrayal, abandonment, low self esteem, with

just the intention in your mind of being caring. You have to put your body where your good intentions are. I have found that deeply habit-protected places stay protected, and you can't really let go into the vulnerability of being in such a felt sense unless your body experiences you being caring with **all** your felt senses. Without this constancy there is a kind of deception toward a precious part of you that wants to trust your presence but can't.

The habit of felt sensing and the habit of CFP go together. CFP is not something you do just to help you hold a scary, threatening felt sense. It is an habitual body stance that you grow into in relationship to **all felt senses**. It grows out of a deep reverence and affection and awe for all felt senses and their potential to open your right next step into this world of gift. All your felt senses begin to get VIP treatment, and when the habit is consistent, then I found to my surprise a most exciting breakthrough occurs.

The body is the bridge to immortality

The habit of felt sensing is a practical, physical way to open my body's consciousness to the transcendent giftedness of everything, including events that threaten biological life. Living itself can be prayer. Our body itself, which we so identify with mortality, is meant to be our conscious bridge into immortality. It is the body process that creates an experiential faith. The habit of felt sensing gives us the body-feel for how in the practical order we can live connected in this world of gift, no matter what happens to us.

Protected Places Surface

After about a year, I began to find in the midst of nurturing some felt sense, another felt sense totally unrelated would suddenly surface and shift. One example that left me weak in the knees was a realization that despite all my conscious intentions, I had been Focusing to fix or gain control according to my preconceived definition of what is OK and what is not OK. It seems that when the habitually protected places can rely on the consistency of caring feeling presence and habitual felt sensing, as the way they will be treated by my body, then these protected places surface and tell their story, because I am no longer unconsciously using Focusing to fix them.

If what I am experiencing is verified by other people, this will be one of the most significant forward steps ever taken showing the vital role of Biospiritual or Contemplative Focusing, using the habit of felt sensing as a step beyond the therapeutic model. The therapy box or framework alone becomes too narrow once one is ready to move beyond it. I'm ready to journey on, filled with gratitude for the solid launching pad. It's not abandonment of that helpful support and its structures without which I wouldn't have been ready to graduate. So, once again I can renew my commitment to Focusing as a way of life through the "habit of felt sensing."

To develop the habit of felt sensing, I have found that one can't fill up every minute with reading, thinking, TV, radio, chat rooms, email, music, talking, planning, analyzing, worrying, etc. We must leave ourselves space even to notice our world of felt senses, let alone nurture them. That means we need to grow comfortable with silence several times a day, just being inside whatever is real. This does take a bit of discipline and attention. But, if my experience beckons any who read this, you will not regret the effort involved as a depth and breadth of connecting, hope, and peace flows into your life.



Rev. Edwin McMahon, Ph.D. and his friend and colleague, Rev. Peter Campbell, Ph.D. are co-founders of The BioSpiritual Institute. As Catholic priests and psychologists they began to explore Focusing as a bodily grounded, spiritual process and practice for healthy spiritual growth. In 1975 they founded The BioSpiritual Institute which offers workshops and resources for professionals and individuals around the world. Rev. Ed McMahon died in 2013.

For further information: The BioSpiritual Institute, Inc. P.O. Box 741137, Arvada, CO 80006-1137 Tel: 303-427-5311. www.biospiritual.org info@biospiritual.org

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Dreaming the Real

I'm lying down looking at the colour
of sky falling through trees, dreaming
the real, tasting what it feels like to love it.

Why did it take me so long to let go, simply
exhale, so the day could breath itself in
and open without me standing in the way?

How could I forget the grace of my own body,
strong as this blue, tender as the white
of the wild blossom, warm as midday light?

Let me practise a patience bold enough
to hold every weather, trusting the elements,
the beauty of rain, all its shades of grey.

I want whatever's real to be enough. At least
it's a place to begin. And to master the art
of loving it; feel it love me back under my skin.

Linda France

Enough

These few words are enough.
If not these words, this breath.
If not this breath, this sitting here.
This opening to the life we have refused
Again and again.
Until now,
Until now.

David Whyte

Poems contributed by Gordon Adam

Book Review: Feeling Heard, Hearing Others

By Rob Foxcroft, published by Antonine Books (2018)



Feeling Heard, Hearing Others is a book about empathy, self-empathy, and the act of listening. In the book Rob writes: "The habit of listening to other people will transform you – the listener – in deeper and better ways than anything else can do. Is there anything more likely than listening to bring peace in the heart – happiness in the family – or healing in the world?"

(Reading this book is)...like being the listener in a Focusing session and witnessing fresh beautiful understandings and insights emerging. Siobhan Mellon

It is a guide for experienced and new Focusers alike. Poetry and prose mingle with practical guidance and autobiography to create a work which seeks to heal the rift between listening to self and listening to others.

I was profoundly touched many times reading this book as I found myself meditating on Rob's finely tuned words. There was no way to absorb the content without Focusing. For me the beating heart of what he has to say is on page 27 where he talks about the split between Carl Rogers and Gene Gendlin: "...restoring the broken unity of our tradition, of bringing a Focusing-oriented sensibility back into harmony with a person-centred way of being". This resonated so completely with my own feelings that I found myself crying out loud "Yes, yes, yes!" Sonya Steller

It was past midnight, and I was in a distant field in Devon under a canopy of stars and a humongous tent, lying awake, worrying. So by the light of my iPhone, I scabbled for the book and continued reading. Here were words of such simplicity and depth which had been giving me solace over the past few weeks. I couldn't resist and swiped open my emails, reaching out to Rob. "Page 47" I dictated into the subject line. Then, "ABSOLUTELY LOVE THIS OUTSTANDINGLY BEAUTIFUL PASSAGE!! Love. A midnight reader xxx." The rest of his chapter fell into the midnight void, rescuing me with tales of kindness and the hope it brings. So if you do nothing else, turn to page 47, and read on a little more...and more, and still more... Thank you for such a beautiful book. Elizabeth English (Locana)

The book is an embodiment of the way of the listener it describes. It offers a clear sense of 'the whole thing' of Focusing as a path, as a series of life choices, a way to be in relationship with self, others and the world.

There are three main sections:

- 1. Principles...** In which Rob sets out his principles of Focusing-and-listening
- 2. Practice...** A more experiential section in which the principles are applied
- 3. People...** First there is an interview with Bebe Simon, whose sharing of her experience of the early days of Focusing helps us towards our own narrative of who we are as Focusing tribe. After that, Rob's personal and moving letter to Gene, sent the week that he died, is a lovely way to bring Gene into his place at the heart of the book.

At the end, under the heading, 'Forms for Listening', there are some gently offered guidelines for listening in a Focusing partnership or in a Changes Group.

Rob Foxcroft lives in Glasgow with his wife and son. He teaches piano-playing and meditative listening and offers spiritual accompaniment. As you will discover on reading this book, he is also a gifted writer and poet.

As I read the book, I found myself gently soothed. Several times a deep peace fell over me and I closed my eyes to savour it. There is a sense of being reminded of the most fundamental and precious facets of what it means to be human. Kay Hoffmann

I have just finished this book, which I'm sad about because it's the kind of book that I would have liked to go on forever. From the very beginning when Rob quoted Joseph Conrad: "Words are spoken by the campfire...one heart speaks - another one listens," I was gripped. It's beautiful and my heart has listened. Camilla Sim

'Feeling Heard, Hearing Others' is published by Antonine Books and available for £20.00 + £3.00 (UK) postage. If you would like to buy a copy, please go to www.robfoxcroft.com/book where there is a PayPal link; or write directly to Rob at rob@robfoxcroft.com and include your postal address.

Editor's note: many thanks to the reviewers and to Kay Hoffmann and Claire Carter for compiling this Review

Practitioner Profile – Fiona Parr

My interest in personal development began at the Findhorn Spiritual Community in Scotland where I lived and worked from 1978. After I left in 1983, I continued to facilitate self-development through courses in Circle Dance, Dreamwork and The Transformation Game in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

It was in the early 1990s that I reached a point of change in my life, and that's when I met Focusing. I didn't respond straight away. Focusing didn't grab me. It was only when I joined a peer practice group about a year later that I began to connect with it. During that year, my friends kept inviting me to join and I said I wasn't interested. Finally they asked if I would I do some Dreamwork for them in the group, and they would teach me Focusing - this is how they got me in. I met with that group fortnightly for eighteen years and Focusing became a mainstay in my life.

Focusing had helped me so much that in 2000 I decided to take the Focusing Practitioner training and the Teacher training in 2001, both with Barbara McGavin. Since then I have been fortunate to work with many people, teaching small groups, giving one-to-one sessions and training people to professional level. I am passionately committed to Focusing and I enjoy seeing the resulting changes in my students' lives, as well as my own. It feels a privilege to be able to facilitate people unfolding to their inner wisdom.



Summer at my home in Devon

I love Focusing because of its directness. For me, it is based on simplicity; it gives me access to what is true for me. It generates love and compassion, for myself and others. It is accessible, I have several Focusing partners, and it is free. I like the democracy and empowerment of 'giving therapy away.' We can listen for ourselves and each other. I see it as my 'life-support system': I can give attention to whatever is coming up in my life that feels difficult and something will ease and shift. I always feel better after a Focusing session, because *I am* better, in ways that I could not have predicted.

Practising Focusing has given me access to a wonderful community of other Focusers and I have participated in the British Focusing Association (BFA) ever since I completed my training. I have attended most of the annual AGM gatherings, camps, Focusing Schools and the International Conference at Cambridge. I feel part of what's happening, and this gives me so much. For me, something extraordinary happens when Focusers meet together. There is a special quality of our being together that I can find nowhere else. People are being open to themselves and to others and there is a tangible feeling of respect.

Focusing has led me to travel widely, not only to the camps and conferences in Britain, but also to Europe, the USA, and to India. Because I love meeting with other Focusers in the BFA, it felt natural to extend my connection in Europe. So I have met with some of the European Coordinators and have been helping to set up the European Focusing Association. This gives me a sense of being part of a wider Focusing community. It's not just me on my own. Many people are committed to bringing Focusing into their areas of expertise and out into the world.

In 2005, I received a bursary to attend the 'Weeklong' Certification course in New York, and I met Gene Gendlin there. He took five minutes to answer questions from as many people as possible, responding

quickly, and then saying 'next!' I was delighted and inspired to be in his company. I found him to be clear, humorous, fluid and precisely articulate. In the afternoon when he worked with a few people on their dreams, he demonstrated his compassion, care, love and insight.

I have been lucky to meet many other Focusing teachers, who I might call 'top-notch', or 'world-class' practitioners in the subtle art of listening. I was particularly inspired and moved by meeting Doralee Grindler Katonah, Jim Iberg and Robert Lee at the 'Weeklong'.

Last year I was invited to teach on a Presence-oriented therapy training in India, and I will be going back again this year. Picture the scene. It's hot – 30 degrees – and the windows are open in a second storey room. Trees surround the building and crows are cawing loudly. At particular moments of quiet, like when I am demonstrating Focusing, a crow comes to sit at the open window, peers through the bars into the room and begins to caw. I loved teaching this group of sixteen enthusiastic students. Although they were tired from their work and family commitments, they took Focusing to their hearts. I recall how we sat on the floor and all the women were wearing colourful clothes.

As well as teaching at my house in Dartmoor, I also teach online. This has its own challenges because of us not all being in the same room. And I find it extraordinary to be able to teach people from all over the world at the same time.

What do I enjoy, when I am not teaching Focusing? I live with my cat on the edge of Dartmoor. I love pottering in my garden, and dashing out of the house for a walk on Dartmoor whenever I can. I swim in the summer: in the sea, in rivers and my local outdoor pool. In winter I love nothing more than to thaw out with a good soak in a sauna and Jacuzzi. I enjoy the company of friends, local poetry evenings and music events. I dance five rhythms and occasionally lead Balkan and Gypsy dance events with a friend.

***Fiona Parr** is a BFA recognised Teacher and Mentor, a Focusing Institute Co-ordinator and a qualified teacher of adults (she has a Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)). Fiona is based in Devon, UK and teaches the Focusing Skills Certificate Course in Liverton on Dartmoor and online. She also offers individual Focusing sessions, in person and online, and mentors people for their Focusing practitioner and teacher training.*

www.fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk



News from the Sofa

By Helen Bower, Carolann Samuels and Fiona Parr

After an extended summer break, Carolann, Helen and Fiona are stirring back into action on the BFA front. We and forty others revelled in the wonderful atmosphere of the recent Focusing camp – living for four days in the sphere of so much joyful and gritty processing, sharing and rain showers. What a great community event! It was invigorating to feel the making of so many new connections (inner and outer) as well as the rekindling and deepening of past ones.

We would like to thank Kay, Gordon and Camilla for their huge efforts and skill in organising the camp – they have done this for the last two years, but are now standing down as organisers. We sincerely hope there are Focusers who will step forward as a fresh organising team (of whatever shape) for next year. We are also on the lookout for a new venue for the camp.

Another 'Thank you!' is due to Gordon who has indexed all of the articles and authors of previous Newsletters. The index is viewable or downloadable under 'Newsletters' on the 'Resources' tab of the BFA website <http://www.focusing.org.uk/resources>. The index will be useful for people looking up particular subjects or authors. The index will become web-searchable after planned restructuring of the website – making articles more available to a wider online audience. This sits well with one of the BFA aims to spread the reach of Focusing.

The Annual Gathering and AGM for members is happening in early November and we are gearing up with some exciting ideas of how we can share our time together. There is an intention to extend the scope of our wellbeing, deepening and community endeavours. Furthermore, ideas are afoot for a Summer School in 2020 with a camping option – this can happen if there is energy and people to help create it.

Here is our new sofa email to get in contact with us on any matter: BFAsofa@gmail.com

We extend our warm Autumnal greetings and wish you Focusing depth and adventure as we approach the darker and cosier season!

Helen Bower is a BFA Focusing practitioner. She works as a work-based tutor in the care sector and lives in Stroud, Gloucestershire.
helengoeswalkabout@yahoo.co.uk



Carolann Samuels teaches Focusing 1:1 and in small groups. She incorporates Focusing into her own Yoga practice and teaching and each is enriched by the other.
www.carolannsamuels.co.uk
csamuels@carolannsamuels.co.uk



Fiona Parr is a BFA Recognised Focusing Teacher and Mentor, Focusing Institute Trainer and Certifying Coordinator. She teaches in Devon and online, and she offers individual Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy sessions.
www.fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Forthcoming Workshops & Events

November & December 2018

Deep Listening. Day Workshop with Peter Gill

Gloucestershire (Stroud). 10th November. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Thinking with the Felt Sense (for experienced Focusers) with Peter Afford

London (Clapham). 10th/11th November. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

Inviting Movement and Drawing into Focusing Two-day workshop with Kay Hoffmann

Cambridge. 15th/16th November. kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

Introduction to Focusing (BFA skills certificate Level 1) with Paula Newman and Elizabeth Smith

London (Stanmore). 19th/20th November. www.paulanewmancounsellingservices.co.uk

Blocks and the Inner Relationship (BFA skills certificate days 3 & 4) W/e workshop with Suzi Mackenzie

Brighton. 24th/25th November. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

The Path to Wholeness (BFA skill certificate Level 5) Weekend workshop with Peter Gill

Bristol. 24th/25th November. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

The Gifts of the Body (Wholebody Focusing) Weekend workshop with Kay Hoffmann

Bristol. 24th/25th November. kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

The Power of Presence (BFA skills certificate Level 2) Weekend workshop with Liz Orrell

Warwickshire (Kenilworth). 24th/25th November. www.lizorrell.com lizzie.orrell@gmail.com

Introduction to Focusing Weekend overview with the London Institute of Focusing

London (Islington). 24th/25th November. londonfocusing@gmail.com

Body Wisdom—an Introduction (Two Sundays) with Christine Sherringham

London (Covent Garden). 2nd & 9th December. See www.city.ac.uk for information and booking

Introduction to Focusing (BFA skills certificate Level 2) 4-week online course with Fiona Parr

Online. Tues 2-5pm. Starting 4th December. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

The Path of the Focusing Practitioner 3-day residential workshop for practitioners with Kay Hoffmann

Warwickshire (Purley Chase Centre). 7th-10th December kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

Companionship (BFA skills certificate Level 3) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr

Devon (Liverton). 8th/9th December. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

New Year Focusing Retreat (for people with some experience of Focusing) (5-day residential retreat) with Gordon Adam. Devon (Dartmoor). 28th December—2nd January 2019.

www.balabrook.org.uk/focusing gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

January & February 2019

Reminders (BFA skills certificate Level 4) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr

Devon (Liverton). 5th/6th January. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Focusing Skills Course (BFA skills certificate) Online & residential course with Kay Hoffmann

Online & Warwickshire (Purley Chase Centre). 14th January – 28th June. kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

Focusing Skills & Community Experience (BFA skills certificate) 4 long weekends with Simon McKibben

Galway, Ireland. 24th January—29th September. info@mindfulnesswithcompassion.com

Listening, Language & the Body (days 5 & 6 of BFA skills certificate) W/E workshop with Suzi Mackenzie Brighton. 26th/27th January. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

The Art of Focusing (Introductory workshop—BFA skills certificate Level 1) with Peter Afford London (Clapham). 26th/27th January. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

Companionship (BFA skills certificate Level 3) 4-week online course with Fiona Parr Online. Tuesdays 2-5pm. 5th—26th February. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Applied Focusing (BFA skills certificate Level 5) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr Devon (Liverton). 9th/10th February. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Focusing in Helping Relationships (for experienced Focusers) with Peter Afford London (Clapham). 23rd/24th February. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

March & April 2019

The Art of Listening (BFA skills certificate Level 2) with Peter Afford London (Clapham). 23rd/24th March. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

Reminders (BFA skills certificate Level 4) 4-week online course with Fiona Parr Online. Tues 2-5pm. 26th March—16th April. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Dreaming and Intuition (days 7 & 8 of BFA skills certificate) Weekend workshop with Suzi Mackenzie Brighton. 26th/27th January. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

Focusing Skills Course (BFA skills certificate) Weekly online course with Simon McKibben Online. Mon & Thurs evenings. 11th April—19th December. info@mindfulnesswithcompassion.com

Local Focusing Groups

Brighton and Sussex Focusing Circle. Meets monthly in Brighton, usually on the fourth Saturday of the month from 2-4pm. Contact: Anna anna@workpsychologyhub.co.uk

Bristol Insight Focusing Group. Meets monthly in Bristol on the second or third Sunday of the month from 10am-1pm. Contact: Gordon gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

London Focusing Circle. A list of people in the London area who are available for Focusing partnership. £5 joining fee. <http://www.focusing.co.uk/circle.html>

South Yorkshire Focusing Group. Open group which meets monthly. Contact: Hugh hugh-knopf@rocketmail.com

Stroud Focusing Circle. Meets monthly in Stroud on the first Wednesday of the month from 7.30-9.45pm. Contact: Peter livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Resources & Further Information

British Focusing Association (BFA) www.focusing.org.uk

For further information about all matters relating to Focusing in the UK, including list of practitioners, articles, events, training, resources, etc.

To see past issues of the newsletter click on 'Resources' on the home page, or www.focusing.org.uk/resources and scroll down till you see 'Newsletters' and click on the button.

To sign up to receive this newsletter regularly go to the home page of the BFA website. Enter your email address in the subscribe window on the right below the pictures .

BFA Facebook Forum www.facebook.com/groups/206601209671323/

An easy way to quickly connect with other UK Focusers and to see and post events.

The International Focusing Institute www.focusing.org

The International Focusing Institute (formerly The Focusing Institute) is the 'world HQ' of Focusing and is a source of all sorts of information about Focusing. The website gives access to the Gendlin Online Library as well as lots of articles on a wide range of subjects by other Focusing teachers. The website also carries nearly 100 (30-50min) audio interviews conducted by Serge Prengel with a wide variety of Focusing teachers that have been recorded since 2008. These can be streamed or downloaded from the website.

The European Focusing Association (EFA) efa-focusing.eu

Newsletter Involvement & Contributions

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome and invited. This includes articles, poems, book reviews, photographs, news, event & group details, etc.

Articles should generally be in the range of 500—1200 words. Inclusion of articles will be at the discretion of the editors. Some contributions may be held over for inclusion in a future issue. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss an idea you have for an article.

Help in producing the newsletter is also welcome and we invite anyone who would like to be involved to get in touch—this could be editing, design & layout, proof-reading, distribution, etc.

Feedback & Ideas

Your feedback is invited! We would really like to know what you think of the newsletter and if you have any suggestions or ideas for its development. Please send an email with feedback to Gordon. We hope to add extra features in forthcoming issues.

Forthcoming Issues of the Newsletter:

We currently aim to publish the newsletter 3 times a year and would appreciate receiving your submissions as soon as possible for the next issue in March 2019.

The deadline for receiving contributions for this issue is **20th January 2019**.